

FROM VICTIMS TO VICTIMIZERS: ON THE “MASS PSYCHOLOGY” OF ISRAEL

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INTRODUCTION

The most heinous moment of the 20th C., if not all of human history was the rise and fortunate fall of the Third Reich. While warfare, brutality, death and destruction may go back thousands of years, the sheer magnitude of the battles of WWII, the massive casualties, deaths, pain and suffering were unprecedented. Historians debate the numbers of dead, injured and displaced, but most seem to agree that at least 100 million people perished between the battles of massive armies, attacks upon civilians and death camps that marked the Holocaust. Although mass murder, if not outright genocide, has long been part of human history, the enormity, organization, rational planning and efficient execution of the Final Solution were unprecedented in the annals of human barbarity. The consequences that conflagration have long endured.

From the ashes of that horrendous conflagration, there arose an economically integrated Europe of almost borderless, relatively peaceful nations that make wars between former bitter enemies seem unlikely. But there have also been many bloody post war conflicts, independence struggles and civil wars that were quite violent and destructive. Many, if not most former colonies sought independence, and often fought for their freedom—ending the traditional empires of the “Great Powers.”

At the end of the 19th C., a number of European Jews sought refuge in Ottoman Palestine. These early Zionists, typically left wingers from Russia envisioned socialist communities far from the anti Semitism of Tsarist Russia. Most sought to live under the Ottomans who had a long reputation for hospitality to Jews. In 1917, Britain, having gained control of Palestine when the Ottoman Empire collapsed, promised the Jews an eventual homeland. Britain was however reluctant to honor the Balfour declaration-or grant independence to other colonies. In turn, various resistance groups took to armed struggle.¹ After WWII, many of the remaining Jews of Europe, typically camp survivors and/or their children, typically displaced persons managed to get to Palestine and began to create a Jewish homeland for themselves. Eventually, the UN partitioned the mandated land into Israel and Palestine and the rest is history—a long, bloody, now seeming intractable history of war, death and seemingly intractable enmity. As will be argued, the legacy of the Shoah, and its mantra of “Never Again” has been an essential aspect of the creation myth of Israel’s birth, a central component of its identity and the basis of its assertive nationalist

¹ The Jewish settlers formed a military group, Haganah to protect themselves from various Palestinian forces. A number of more radical elements split off to form the Irgun and in turn, some even more extremist groups split from Irgun to form the Stern gang. After WWII, a number of European Jews had fought in the British Army came to the Palestinian Mandate. These groups, highly trained, and well armed would form the core of the IDF which from the beginning was a formidable military organization.

ideology that justifies its relationships to other peoples near and far, friend and foe (Burg, 2009).

Wars, revolutions, social mobilizations and movements of reaction or resistance result from the complex interplay of historically specific economic, political and cultural conditions that impact actors. Collective activities require that a critical mass of actors be predisposed to interpret the world within certain ideological frameworks and motivated to respond to events in accordance with that ideology. I will suggest that the Critical theory of “mass psychology”, located within a theory of ideology, enables crucial insights into the past, present and future. As Wilhelm Reich (1945), first noted, the understandings of an economic crisis, political choices, justifications for war, or other political events are perceived and understood in terms of underlying “character structure” which, in his view, enabled ideology to act as a material force. In other words, following his insights, informed by Gramsci, an ideology, as a moment of hegemonic struggle over cultural meanings and values, can be seen as the values, practices and discourses through which a historic block (ruling class) provides moral or cultural justifications for their authority claims.

But such claims must resonate with the typical character structure to provide the “willing assent” of the masses to the elites. *In other words, the embrace of an ideology depends on already existing “character structure”*. Thus as will be argued, not only did the Shoah become a foundational ideological justification for the State of Israel, but the legacy of Hitler’s rule, of displacements, deprivations, ghettos, camps, torture and brutal death, impacted aspect of Israeli character in such ways that have facilitated the embrace of the Holocaust to legitimate onerous conduct toward the Palestinians. But further, the use, if not manipulate of the legacy of the Shoah has resulted in “willing assent” to the historic blocks that have pretty much led Israel since 1948.

Thus the history of the State of Israel, from its earliest moments, its “ethnic cleansing” of perhaps 700,000 Palestinians in order to establish itself as a Jewish State, to its pre-emptive wars, its conquest and enduring occupation of the West Bank, and most recently its invasion of Gaza must be understood by noting the enormous influence of the ways that Holocaust shaped Israel. But further, that legacy also shaped the mass psychology of Israel that has led to the embrace of the Holocaust legacy and a commitment to “never again” that has led to the deaths, dehumanization and brutalization of the Palestinian people. While many critics of Israel have equated the IDF with that the *Wehrmacht*, and proclaimed Zionism as Fascism, the reality is more complex. That said the study of the rise and nature of fascism may yet provide us with certain important insights. More specifically,

IDEOLOGY, CHARACTER AND THE 3D REICH

The explanations for the rise of fascism comprise a small cottage industry. There is a small but significant literature that has looked at the social psychological factors disposing the embrace of German Fascism. The most comprehensive formulation for the rise of Hitler came the works of Wilhelm Reich, Eric Fromm, Theodor Adorno and Max

Horkheimer. For Reich, character played a central role in the mediation between ideology and power. Ideology, once internalized as aspect of selfhood, eg insinuated within as the superego, acts like a material force. Thus a shared ideology can shape a group's perceptions and impel collective action on the basis of character. But as Reich noted, there must be an affinity between the psychological aspects of an ideology and underlying character. This was the central question for "mass psychology"; how and why the Germans, or at least lower middle classes (artisans, shop keepers, minor officials) and segments of the workers, embrace National Socialism. The answer was ²the authoritarian character, a personality type that was very typical of members of this strata, rooted in the nature of their family life, itself shaped by their status and the nature of their work. resonated with the authoritarian ideology of Fascism and character and ideology of Hitler. They were typically powerless vis a vis the elites to whom they needed to defer. But conversely, they needed to dominate subordinates. Fascism gave the "little man" feelings of power, pride in his/her repression of sexuality, and named enemy Others who were responsible for Germany's ill fortunes,

His influenced the subsequent work of Fromm, Adorno and Horkheimer. As will be argued, the authoritarian character, shaped by fears and anxieties, mediated through identification, was psychological "prepared" to accept the authority of Hitler. But for much of human history, people have readily submitted to superior authority while demanding obedience from below.

1 The Dynamics of the Authoritarian Character³

There are four aspects of the authoritarianism character can help us understand certain aspects of social/political behavior. These are: domination or subordination, valorization of strength and toughness, and the projection of aggression-justifying one's aggression. Finally, given tendencies toward anti-intraception, there is impaired capacity for empathy that results in the dehumanization of the Other such that his/her pain and suffering is rendered invisible. .

A) Hierarchical status:

The core moment of authoritarianism is the structuring of social relations according to hierarchies of power and in turn the need to submit to higher authority and the simultaneous need to dominate subordinates. Authoritarianism is rooted in sadomasochism, the tendency to find psychological gratifications in either inflicting pain on others or experiencing pain from others. Far more often, the pain is psychological, humiliation and degradation rather than physical. As will be seen, sadomasochism is not rooted in sexuality, but anxiety, it is a way of dealing with the world and other people in ways that assuage anxiety and "makes the self complete" (Fromm, 1992). The structure

² There have been hundreds, if not thousands of books and papers written on the topic. The major empirical study remains Adorno (1950) while the extensive literature of the next 50+ years has been summarized by Altmeyer (2006). See; <http://members.shaw.ca/jeanaltmeyer/drbob/TheAuthoritarians.pdf>

³ I will not try to exhaust the characteristics of authoritarianism such as conventionality, conformity, tendencies to stereotypy, superstition etc. Rather, I will show that these core qualities that were not only clearly evident in segments of the Germans, but lies at the core of Israel's policies toward its neighbors.

of hierarchical domination orders the world provides a sense of agency, dignity and community (attachments).

B) Strength and toughness

For the authoritarian, there is a valorization of strength and toughness. Relationships with others are seen in terms of admiration, if not emulation of those who are strong, powerful and desirable, and denigration, devaluation and contempt to those who are weak, powerless and easily dominated. Power may not be simply physical power, but determination, what can be called “will” and the capacity to persevere despite hardships and obstacles. One expression is the tendency for destructiveness as an expression of strength-indeed, it is compensation for (prior) weakness.

C) Projection of aggression

The thwarting of the self, the feelings of powerlessness, frustrations and repressions, that are typical of authoritarian character are most evident in their anger and hostility that are seen as “justified” responses to various adversities of life and/or machinations by the evil Other. While anger is an inherent aspect of life, there is fundamental difference between genuine anger in response to various frustrations of life, and injustices and the projection of one’s own aggression to outgroups—the contemptible Other.

D Impaired capacity for empathy

One of the major consequences of authoritarianism, with its valorization of hierarchy, strength, the projection of aggression and avoidance of introception is the impaired capacity for empathy with the other and in turn, his/her dehumanization. Given that the Other has been seen as an inferior a subordinate, who nevertheless harbors untoward thoughts, if not actual actions, s/he is not longer regarded as a fellow human being and as a result, there is a loss of empathy and indifference to his/her pain and suffering. Indeed, having been the “object” of his/her aggression, any and all contempt, hatred, recriminations or aggressive are not simply justified, but desirable. This dynamic, often seen in the “narcissism of petty differences” has been seen in most cases of warfare and conflict in which the Other is demonized and vilified and thus deserving of pain, suffering and even death. It has been evident in sustaining slavery, and/or racial/ethnic prejudices. As was evident, the Nazis so demonized the Jews, not only as racial inferiors, but have little more than harmful that needed to be eradicated. In their propaganda film the Eternal Jew, the Jew was compared rats infesting a granary that needed to be gassed to eliminate and cleanse .

2 The origins of the authoritarian character.

In the classical psychoanalytic formulations authoritarianism was largely the product of repressive parenting, especially by strict fathers who were themselves highly authoritarian, likely to demand obedience and securing through, punitive socialization, that might border on the abusive. But that said, there was a role for interpretation, for boys anyway, it was not just the father’s role per se, but the unconscious threat that he would punish them for having erotic feelings to the mother. Yes, castration! Yikes. ! Given the fear of “castration anxiety” as punishment, the boy was said to “identify with

the aggressor” and in so doing, internalize the father’s values as his own superego, renounce his Oedipal wishes, and cement his gender identity.

While this theory may be, or was once useful in clinical work, it needs some revision for our purposes. Firstly, as Reich and Fromm noted, there was a class factor, namely the lower middle classes were likely prone to authoritarianism. Fromm suggested that such groups were especially prone to the fear of freedom unleashed by modernity-and assuaged by authoritarianism, conventionality and destructiveness. Fear and anxiety were especially likely among this class given their precarious economic positions as well and their underlying, yet repressed erotic desires—that might explode at any time. Their sexual morality, indeed restraint, was the basis of their moral and social “superiority” over the working classes.

Besides class factors, historical factors can foster or mitigate authoritarianism. When I was a young graduate student, I took several courses with Bruno Bettelheim who wrote about his experiences in the camps. In his analysis of behavior in extreme situations, he described in detail the behavior of the *kapos*, Jews given responsibilities to run the camps and police other Jews. As time wore on, the *kapos* began to look, talk and act more and more like the Nazis, and indeed were often more brutal and punitive toward the inmates than were the Nazis. In his analysis, perhaps a bit of autobiography, he suggested that their own fear of punishment fostered their “identification with the aggressor” as an anxiety reducing mechanism. As *kapos* they gained some tangible rewards, food and better conditions as well as psychic rewards of empowerment and feeling they would be more highly regarded by their captors

From what has been argued, it might now be suggested that while authoritarianism may well be rooted in the socialization practices of early childhood, it is nevertheless impacted by later events and experiences especially fear Altemeyer (2006). When people are afraid, when they feel threatened, vulnerable and in danger, they seek powerful leaders who can provide them with safety and protection. Thus under conditions of fear, whether fear for one’s life or to preserve one’s lifestyle and identity, authoritarianism, can assuage fears. For example, shortly after 9/11, most American feared another terrorist attack, and in turn, they rallied around W and tolerated little dissent from the “received wisdom”-especially when the wisdom they received told them that Saddam Hussein was behind 9/11, he had WMDs and was about to use them against the US. .

ISRAEL AND THE SHADOW OF THE HOLOCAUST.

For a nation as well as an individual, the early history has important consequences that endure long after the early history consists are dim memories that have been refashioned into the collective memory which impacts the identities, feelings, values and actions of the society.⁴ But as we also know, collective memories are social negotiated and constructed for social and political reasons that serve elites such that they often resemble

⁴The notion of collective memory was first developed by Halbwachs (1992), his concern was primary the group construction of what is remembered and what is ignored. My concern is more the social psychological consequence of such collective narratives.

mythologies. For modern Israel, there were three moments that shaped its collective memory, identity and destiny.⁵ In the late 19th C, a variety of idealistic, Eastern European Jews, often persecuted as Jews and/or socialists, moved to Ottoman Palestine to create utopian communities, the kibbutzim. The local populations of Palestine did not take kindly to the influx of European intruders. This was clear in the 1920 assault on Tel Hand and the 1929 massacres of Jews at Hebron and Safed. In response, the settlers formed the Haganah, an armed self defense force for their protection. That force would become the core of the IDF. Offshoots of Haganah, the Irgun and Stern gangs, led the fight for independence from England. And of course, the major event that would shape the exodus of European Jews was the Holocaust. With the UN granting independence and partition of Israel/Palestine, Israel came into being. There was ethnic cleansing of Palestinians (Morris, 19xx). At this time the new state was attacked by five Arab armies.

While the historians may argue as to who struck first, who was to blame, the fundamental point I wish to make is that between long standing enmity from local Arabs, the persecution and near annihilation of European Jews, attacks from Arab armies in 48, 67 and 73, subsequent Intifadas, suicide bombings and rocket attacks from Hizbollah and most recently from Hamas, fear and insecurity, typically based on real tragedies have played a major role in the construction of Israel's collective memory. Nowhere is this more evident in the centrality of the Shoah as one of the foundational moments of the history of modern Israel. But that said, and many have made that point, there have been major social psychological consequences. On the positive side, this legacy has fostered solidarity between segments of Israeli society that might otherwise be in conflict, Ashkenazi Sephardic, Secular-Orthodox, German Jews and the rest. Moreover, the precarious position of Israel surrounded by "enemies" has fostered its economic growth, scientific prominence and its powerful military. But while that power should mitigate fears of attack let alone consequence, that has not been the case.

Fear and insecurity is constantly reinforced by the all pervasive domination of the Shoah in everyday life-especially by elites who use the Shoah and "never again" as rallying calls for their every political initiative. The result of this fear, located within a hegemonic ideological matrix shaded by the Holocaust, has shaped the "mass psychology" of Israel. This has led to viewing any and all actions and events through a Shoah lens that in turn has had adverse consequences for the Palestinians and peace in the Middle East. Moreover, in the process, the Israelis themselves have lost an essential part of their humanity as seen in their occupation of the West Bank and treatment of the Palestinians. Avigail Abarbanel notes:

The only way to interpret Israel's behavior during the past 61 years is through understanding the psychology of its society and its leaders. To ignore Israel's psychology is dangerous because it means that any intervention based only on political considerations, will miss the mark and risk being irrelevant. Indeed if you look at the history of diplomacy and 'peace negotiations' in the region, it is quite obvious that they have achieved nothing at all. Things seem to be

⁵ For a full discussion of Israel's collective memory based on the Torah, the Bar Kochba Revolt, Masada etc, see Zerubavel, 1974. See also Aharony, 2004, and most recently Burg (2009)

progressing on a trajectory determined by something that to someone in my profession, looks more like a mental illness than a political plan, bearing no relation to any rational diplomatic efforts, ‘roadmaps’, peace plans or truces...Israel’s behavior is a direct product of its psychological struggle with the implications of Jewish identity, which in turn determines Israel’s very reason for existence.⁶

While between the illegal occupation of lands gained through conquest and the everyday treatment of the Palestinians, critics of Israel/Israeli policies have called Israel a Fascist state and/or called it people Nazis. While these labels may provide a way of expressing anger and aggression towards leaders and policies, they provide little help clarifying the issues, resolving them and moving toward peace. But at the same time, the fear and insecurity of mass psychology, embedded within a Holocaust framework, have fostered authoritarian responses that are quite similar to those of the Nazis. **Caveat: Israel has never plotted genocide. Moreover, the German Jews, actually most European Jews never did anything to warrant the irrational German hatreds culminating in Death camps. Meanwhile, Palestinians, from the early attacks and massacres, the alliance of the Mufti of Jerusalem and Hitler, suicide bombers and Qessem rocket attacks against Sderot, as well as inflammatory rhetoric promising to “push Israel into the sea” have given credence to all the fears.** And various Arab countries, as well as Persia, through wars, boycotts and aid to various extremist and often terrorist groups, have not helped the cause of peace and reconciliation-but that may not be their goal.

1) The Holocaust Lives

Like many tourists, not only did I visit Yad Vashem, but I took my daughter the first time she visited Israel. This memorial for the six million victims assures that the Shoah remains the dominant frame through which most Israeli history, the current events of the present and the imagined future is interpreted and understood. Just before the recent election of Netanyahu, psychotherapist Avigail Abarbanel had the occasion to interview his father, Professor Ben-Zion Netanyahu, at some point in the interview he said,

“Today we are facing plain and simple, a danger of annihilation. This is not only the ongoing existential danger to Israel, but a real danger of complete annihilation. People think that the Shoah (Holocaust) is over — but it is not, it is continuing all the time” (My translation from the Hebrew).⁷

As she notes:

The views of Netanyahu Senior do not represent a lunatic fringe, but the Israeli mainstream. When I was growing up in Israel, things were much the same. I and everyone I knew believed in earnest that we were always at risk of annihilation.

⁶ <http://www.avigailabarbanel.me.uk/growing-insanity.html>

⁷ <http://www.avigailabarbanel.me.uk/growing-insanity.html>

Fear of annihilation is at the heart of Jewish, not just Israeli culture and it pre-dates the Holocaust.⁸

In his recent book, Burg (2009) has more fully developed the implications of how the Shoah, including the Warsaw Ghetto uprising became a dominant framework through which Israel has forged its collective memory, its identity, and understandings of contemporary political realities. But this has led to a “Shoah inflicted trauma that seems like an incurable disease.” As he goes on to note, just as when the only tool you have is a hammer, all problems are nails; when the only frame for understanding Israel’s history and future is the Shoah, that has become shaded by cultural militarism and a mass psychology of authoritarianism (see below), all “enemies” become Hitler and his Nazi’s, all political problems are “solved” by force. But even more important, actual memories are erased and alternative frames of understanding are discarded. “The only presence of the trauma in our life, is the Holocaust, which prevents us to trust anybody—to trust ourselves, to trust our neighbors, to trust the world—and therefore creates this kind of a reality”.

Thus the history of the forced expulsion of the Palestinians, the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians, a page from Hitler’s notebook, has been expunged. And when Palestinian’s demonstrate resistance, from maps that do not show Israel, to boastful claims of victory, or actual violence, this fear triggers authoritarian responses, located within a Shoah frame that in turn leads to the most onerous of responses. Otherwise said, Arab/Palestinian leaders become seen as the new Hitlers and the rest of the Palestinians vary between brown shirts, black shirts or the *Todenkorps*.

Burg argues that constant stress on the Holocaust has led Israel to replace the humanistic ideals of the early Kibbutzim with militarism. Burg draws a disturbing parallel with Bismarckian Germany.

"The few who shared his [Nietzsche’s] views understood that German national revival at gunpoint was a poor substitute for true national revival, such as was needed to repair a decadent regime and society. . . In such a situation the military state would sanctify flawed values, such as nationalism, belligerence, and the idolization of a national security doctrine, above all others. Militarists know no other way of functioning but to manipulate people’s prejudices against those perceived ‘others’ through social and political toughness." (Burg, 2009p.53)

The results of the hegemony of the Holocaust framework, from the ethnic cleanings of 1948, to the devastation of Gaza in 2008-9 has led to so many policies more typical of the Nazis than the ideals of early Zionism. To list and catalog the human rights abuses of Israel, its violations of international law, war crimes and its indifference to world opinion, would not only be a lengthy diversion, but not really helpful.⁹ Most progressives within and without Israel are well aware of its pernicious practices from everyday humiliations

⁸ <http://www.avigailabarbanel.me.uk/growing-insanity.html>

⁹ The same can be said of course for the Palestinians whose forms of legitimate resistance often cross the line to target innocent civilians, which then “justify” brutal Israeli counterattacks and oppression.

imposed on West Bank Palestinians to the devastating attacks of its military in Lebanon or Gaza. But to understand this, we must reconsider the mass psychology post Shoah Israel.

2) Authoritarianism revisited:

Let us return to the qualities of authoritarianism which as has been seen as a the fault line of responses to fear and anxiety, that have refracted through a Holocaust shaded framework-- aided and abetted by various acts of violent resistance and retribution by vastly weaker Palestinians/Arabs. As was mentioned, authoritarianism structures the world in terms of hierarchies of rank by wealth, power or virtue. As a long history show, such rankings often turn out to be simply a ranking of higher, lower and less than human.

When a society faces genuine threats to its safety and security, not only does this foster authoritarianism as social psychological response, but if and when there is build up of the role of the military, institutions became more authoritarian. In a society which the military plays a dominant role (Sparta, Imperial Rome or Bismarck's Germany), power and toughness are among the most salient dimensions of rank--along with intelligence and cunning. Moreover, in such societies, where the qualities of empathy, compassion and caring are subordinated to domination, power and strength, people aren't very nice to each other.

Israelis have never been particularly kind to each other. It's one of the reasons I left actually. In my late twenties I started to grow weary of the unkind, harsh and unforgiving atmosphere around me. It was a tough place to live in not because of our 'enemies' but because of how people treated one another.

But what must be noted, is that within its collective memory, the Israeli born Sabra's once felt that the European Jews lacked a fighting spirit, they were weak and led like lambs to slaughter. When the masses of Ashkenazi survivors came to the Mandate, and it was evident that they needed to become tough and strong soldiers as well as artist, scholars and business men. From without, the officers of Haganah would attempt to turn them into soldiers. But where would they find models of toughness, power and determination. Sadly, as was noted before, though identification with the aggressor, they could themselves become strong, powerful warriors—with training from Haganah officers as well as the many Jews who fought with the British and learned the techniques of modern warfare.¹⁰ But further, given the “glorious” role of Haganah, Irgun and Palmach turned IDF, there is a valorization of male power and patriarchy despite the role of women in the society and the IDF.

¹⁰ Another part of the collective memory constructs the war of 1948 as a reply of David and Goliath, a few rag tag Jew with a few WWI rifles turned back 5 powerful armies. Again it was the Syrian, Jordanian, Egyptian, Lebanese and Iraqi, together with some Palestinians, Saudis and Yemenites that were poorly trained and poorly armed. Hostilities broke out in May of 48, the IDF was organized and by July, outnumbered and outgunned and outfought the combined Arab armies. Ironically, the early air force consisted of German designed, Czech Messerschmidts that soon devastated the Egyptian Spitfires. Yet the David-Goliath scenario remains part of the collective memory.

For most Israelis, the tough Israeli men, the citizen-soldiers who protect the society stride atop of the social hierarchy. Israeli women are below, and the Arabs/Palestinians are ranked as less than human-much as Nazi ranked Jews along side rats.¹¹ What this means is twofold, 1) the demonization and denigration, if not dehumanization of the Arab/Palestinians not only makes them a legitimate target for retribution for any and all acts of a minority and justifies any and all actions and policies no matter how harsh, arbitrary and unfair. While surely Israeli women are hardly subordinated in most realms, what is suppressed in the Israeli mass psychology is the feminine side of humanity, the loving, caring, conciliator moments that might mitigate and temper the more assertive aggressive side.¹² (I am not suggesting gender essentialism; these qualities can be found in both men and women). Rather, the valorized masculine toughness that is ranked higher than female tenderness eradicates the capacities for empathy. Thus we can see how even many of the women in the government, think Golda Meir or Tzivi Lipni acted as aggressive as any man.

Insofar as Hitler claimed the Germans were the victims of aggression from Jews, Poles, Russians and the French, it was clear that like a typical authoritarian, he was projecting his (and German) aggression to the Other in order to justify his (their) aggression as defensive, as the appropriate response to an attack, actual or likely. Thus we note that within Israel, the dominant views hold that the Arabs/Palestinians are to blame for all the aggression, and the IDF, whether in combat or security work, is always virtuous.

One of the cognitive aspects of authoritarianism is rigid black and white thinking without shadings of grey. Various things/people are good or bad or located in some other dichotomy. The essence of such thought is decontextualization-to remove something from a larger explanatory context. This insures that any and all aggressive behavior and attitudes of the Other are not only despicable, but without any justifications. Thus animosity, resentment and even resistance are not seen as reactions to injustice. Thus, much like the US was and remains oblivious to how its fiscal and political policies in the ME fostered the anger and resentment that led to 9/11, Israelis cannot fathom how much of the anger and hostility that the Palestinians harbor is the direct result of Israeli policies starting with the ethnic cleansing of over 600,000 people-if the IDF records are correct. The confiscation and occupation of the West Bank, populating the land with settlers, demolitions of houses, check points and economic strangulation has not only fostered a great deal of anger and resentment, but without other opportunities, these policies stoke the fires of extremism. Thus Hamas, first created by Israel as a counter foil to Arafat, grew in response to both the failure of the PA to deliver needed services as well as the denigration and humiliation of Israeli occupation. Hamas, while willing to sign a Hudna and cease hostilities, is dedicated the destruction and annihilation of Israel. Otherwise said, Israel created a Frankenstein. As they say in Yiddish, "haucham grosses".

Finally, as a result of what has been said, noting the cognitive aspects of authoritarian thinking, the final result is an impaired capacity for empathy that results in the

¹¹ There are of course finer gradations between German Jews, *yekke*, and the rest, *Ostjude*, etc.

¹² Tova Benksi (200x) in her work on the Women in Black has argued how the militarization of Israeli society has re-inscribed the very patriarchy the early Zionists sought to end.

dehumanization of the Other and indifference to his/her pain, indeed justifies his/her pain in the name of preventing his/her aggression. Many Israelis are aware of how much the Palestinians suffer-but feel that the Palestinians not only deserve it, but if it prevents terrorism, its justified.

3) The return of the oppressed.

One of the most consistent findings in both clinical practice and empirical research has been the dynamics of child abuse, most abusers were themselves abused as children. Few therapists have shown the empathy and understanding of Alice Miller on how victims of such trauma repeat often repeat the same abuse upon children when they become adults. Much like the pattern of how power assertive authoritarian child rearing renders the child powerless, as an adult, s/he asserts his/her power over the child and relives his/her childhood with a seemingly different script. As she has argued in a number of books, children that are beaten and abused, feel humiliated, unworthy of respect. When they grow up, this early abuse becomes the template for treating Others who are powerless to defend themselves. Many people have noticed how the trauma and humiliation of the powerless victims of Fascism, much like abused children, much like the *Kapos* who identified with their guards, have used the Shoa framework to justify their unconscious needs to humiliate and denigrate.

As a psychotherapist I recognize this reaction to trauma. Some people who have been traumatized respond to it by becoming very powerful and very frightening. This is a reaction to having been hurt, and a response to the desire to never be hurt again...Israel and perhaps the rest of the world too, refuse to see that Israel's problems are a direct result of deep-seated Jewish trauma and its consequences. Israel's response to trauma was to arm itself to the teeth, and to become an incredibly aggressive country while perpetuating inside and out the myth of victimhood and goodness...Unfortunately this isn't a good or wholesome way to live. This is a way of life that perpetuates inner conflicts, leads to isolation and invites animosity from others. It's hard to spread good will and kindness in the world when one's inner world is based on an adversarial foundation. What is true for individuals can also be true for whole societies. Israel had a chance to heal its traumatized Jewish past but instead chose to perpetuate the trauma and pass it on to subsequent generations. The very creation of the state of Israel is a reaction to trauma. If you understand the dynamic of trauma and the solutions people try to find to it you can understand why Israel's existence has always been fraught with trouble. The fact that Israel has never used its education system and national institutions to facilitate healing from trauma is sad but not unusual. Trauma becomes so much a part of the sufferer's identity, that to heal means to change the very foundation of who you are, something most people, let alone entire cultures are rarely prepared to do.

CONCLUSION

The endless cycle of war, hatred and animosity has made life difficult for both the victims and the victimizers in Israel/Palestine. Given the domination of the Holocaust ideology, its colonization of everyday life, its sedimentation within identities, the militarism that it has engendered, together with its authoritarianism and patriarchy, there seems little chance of transformation. The emotional intensity renders alternative frames unlikely. Finally, the overheated rhetoric of various leaders, together with various acts of aggression by Palestinian militants, give credence and justification to the ideology—as seen in the rightward shift in the recent government.

But is this to resign ourselves to an inexorable fate. In the short run, we cannot expect too much, but as has been shown by many, things are very different now. The recent violence in Gaza has been a major public relations blow to Israel. Without the financial, military and most of all political support of the USA, Israel is unlikely to change its posture. But given recent shifts by the Obama Clinton, given the growing support for a 2 state solution, there will be more and more pressure for Israel to modify its behavior.

The tragedy of the ME seems endless. So many lives lost, so many tragedies to the living, and so many glorious futures thwarted. Among the saddest aspect of the conflict, is that as the Israelis dehumanized the Palestinians, much as the Nazis had done to them, in the process, they have lost their own humanity.